3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

487 milking the sheep and goats by the water's edge while the men and children looked on.

[231] Next morning we awoke to find a brilliant sun shining on a cheerful scene composed of yaks, yak-calves, donkeys, ponies, sheep, goats, curly-headed children, rainbow-clothed white-turbaned women and one to two shaggy men (the rest were still in bed), against a background of fat mushroom-like *aq-ois*, foaming river and steep green hill-side. I had decided to halt a day at this pleasant spot, partly to give the caravan a rest, partly in order to reconnoitre on foot a pass called the Merki Davan by which I hoped to cross into the upper Qara-tash valley and thus gain access to one of the blank patches on the map which Sir Aurel Stein had advised me to explore. To cut a long story short,[1] Gerard Price and I, assisted by Juma Beg with his men and yaks, reached a height of 16,500 feet on a snowy spur, from which point we could see that the "pass" was quite out of the question for our caravan. It was nothing but a lofty ridge of rock at least 17,000 feet high, deep in snow even on the south side and defended also by steep ice-slopes.

[758] Meanwhile D. passed a strenuous but amusing day with the Kirghiz ladies, all of whom clamoured (mostly quite unnecessarily) for medical treatment and seemed to appreciate presents of quinine tabloids and castor oil even more than the beads and other small gifts which D. had brought for them. At any rate, she made herself very popular, for next morning when we marched down the valley their farewells were most affectionate and they walked at her stirrup quite a long way down the valley. One of the younger ones was perfectly lovely; the coloured sketch of her which was done by D. on this occasion and is reproduced as a frontispiece to this book does not flatter her unduly. As a rule, however, the faces of the Kirghiz women, though broad-browed and pleasing, are too flat for beauty.

[37] As we filed down the Yambulak valley it became ever narrower and its sides higher and steeper. The profusion of wild flowers was a revelation; anemones, primulas, king-cups, columbines, antirrhinums, campanulas, asphodel and many others of which we did not know the names grew in masses, especially in places where the sheep and goats could not get at them. Cascades of wild roses grew out of every

[1] For an account of this climb, see "Geographical Journal," November, 1925, p. 388.

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mazlum-kishi is the Turki for "woman" and means literally "oppressed person"). However, small-talk is not so necessary when you have plenty of diseases, as these oppressed ones apparently had, and D. scored another social success. A couple of hours later we were settling into comfortable *aq-ois* provided by Father Christmas on a meadow by the Kinkol River. Near by grew many mushrooms, a rare treat. On the mountain-sides all round we could hear the red-legged partridges calling; I accepted their invitation, and a brace of them soon graced our camp larder. I may mention that between Yambulak and Kichik Karaul not a day passed that we did not bag partridges or hares, or both, for the pot. Next day I had a misfortune in the shape of a nasty fall with the black horse, which came down suddenly at the trot and threw me on to a sharp stone, which bruised my thigh somewhat severely, causing me to faint twice with the pain. I rode the rest of the march (and the two following days) on a yak or pony with my leg in a sling, neither a comfortable nor a rapid mode of progression. This delayed us very much and we took a day longer to get into Kashgar than we would otherwise have done.

Further down the valley became very wild and rugged, and raging glacier-torrents from the Qizil Tagh or "Red Mountains" on our right had to be crossed as well as the main stream. Here, at a place called Sasik Tika, we noticed a single poverty-stricken *aq-oi*. I distinctly remember commenting on the sinister look of the valley at this point. I was reminded of this the following spring, when I was present at the trial by the Magistrate of Yangi Hissar of the Kirghiz to whom the *aq-oi* belonged for the murder of a Chitrali traveller.[1]

Soon after leaving the next camp, Toqoi Bashi, the first real trees we had seen since Tashqurghan appeared, and after that we were never without some. Short, thick-set trees they were, with fluted bark and small, pointed leaves; further down the valley some of them attained great size. We did not then know to what species they belonged, but they afterwards became very familiar. They were the desert poplar (*P. varifolia*, Turki *toghraq*) which is the characteristic tree of the Tarim Basin and, outside the oases, the only one that grows at all freely.

That night we camped at the first settled village of Kashgaria, Kichik Qaraul or "The Little Fort". It was pleasant to sit on the grass and munch juicy melons, nectarines and

[1] For an account of this trial, see Ch. X.

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toddling down to the ice-covered stream with blackened copper water-jugs to fill, a pretty sight. Later, when our camp was pitched, came three cheerful vast-turbaned, apple-cheeked ladies, with their sewing and their babies, and made themselves comfortable on the grass in front of D.'s tent, chatting with us and among themselves until D. should be ready to receive them inside. Then they crowded into her tent and hung excitedly over her unpacking. Though accustomed to friendliness and naturalness on the part of the Kirghiz, D. was at first a little puzzled at the remarkable lack of shyness of these women, on our very first appearance among them; but the mystery was soon solved. As she was setting out her toilet-table one of them suddenly pounced on a box of *trèfle incarnat* with cries of "Ufpah! Ufpah!" which means "powder-puff." D. was astonished, until they explained. One of them, it appeared, was the daughter of old Ibrahim Beg of Yambulak, and had recently been on a visit to her parents, who had told her all about our stay in their valley last July on our way to Kashgar. Consequently, the Suget ladies knew all that D. had then said and done, how she had given those of Yambulak cold cream for their hands and had initiated them in the mysteries of powder and puff, how she had promised them gloves and had painted a picture of the Beg's pretty daughter-in-law, and many other items of breathless interest. So D. knew what was expected of her, and ere long the camp resounded with their delighted gigglings as they powdered their noses and preened themselves in front of D.'s camp mirror.

Soon after leaving Suget Ayaghi we passed through a remarkable cleft in the high rocky wall and found ourselves in a wide sunny valley with snow-clad peaks at its head. Here, at a height of about 9,000 feet, were the summer pastures of the Suget Kirghiz and two of their cottages. There were no trees, but high up on the flanks of the central peaks we could see patches of fir-forest. This, we were told, was the valley to which the missionaries from Yarkand had come more than once for their summer camp. Leaving the Suget Jilgha by a pass just over 10,000 feet high we descended into a pleasant little valley called the Tam Jilgha, so called from the number of stone houses (*tām*) it contained. Poplars grew in it, remarkable at a height of over 9,000 feet, and there was quite a respectable area of cultivation, chiefly barley. Here we saw three different kinds of animal being used in the plough

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136 and we saw plenty of golden marmots at a height of 12,000 feet. A curious rodent about the size of a guinea-pig lived in the fir-forest at 11,000 feet, also a very small red stoat. Hares were plentiful among the juniper woods at 10,000 feet. The highest point at which I found animal life was 16,000 feet, where I saw running about on the snow a small eight-legged spider which is probably the same as that seen by the climbers of Mount Everest at an immense altitude. I also noticed a minute animal like a lizard about an inch long on the moraine of the Torbashi Glacier at 14,500 feet. Birds also are well represented, and include the black eagle, several kinds of hawk, red-legged partridge, Tibetan snow-cock, chough, raven, long-tailed magpie, rock-pigeon and many of the common small birds of northern Europe.

137 I have already spoken of the amazing profusion of wild flowers which in June and July turned the terminal moraines of the glaciers, as well as the marshes, meadows and forest glades into veritable gardens. We did as much amateur botanizing as our other pursuits and our total ignorance of botany permitted. In the course of our two summer visits to Kaying Bashi we pressed some thirty-seven varieties and secured the seeds of seven or eight. D. also painted most of the prettier ones in water-colours. The flower that excited us most was a sweet-smelling kind of crawling purple stock, which grew only in small isolated patches among the loose stones of glacier moraines between 13,000 and 14,000 feet above the sea, by far the highest-growing flower we found. On our return to England we presented our small collection to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. To a layman, the interesting thing about it, according to the Kew experts, was that it belonged to a distinctly Central Asian rather than a Himalayan type, although the valleys in question are only about 180 miles as the crow flies from similar regions in Northern Kashmir, the flora of which is Himalayan. Like most of the flowers, the conifers of the Alps of Qungur belong to the Tien Shan rather than to the Himalayas; with the exception of the small fir-woods seen by us in the Qizil Tagh and heard of in one or two places in the Yarkand River valley, they mark the extreme south-eastern limit of the Tien Shan fir (*Picea schrenkiana*). For twelve hundred miles eastward, the whole length of the great Kunlun and Altyn Tagh Ranges, not a fir-tree is to be found; then come the forests of the Nan Shan, which flourish under moisture-laden winds from the far Pacific.

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want to guide us, though I gave him money and promised him more. Once I thought he had given us the slip among the gorges of the red hills, but we found him again. It was half past eight and pitch dark before our ears were at last greeted by the welcome sound of dogs barking, and a few minutes later we were warming ourselves at a roaring coal fire in a cosy room at the Haji's farm. The old man himself was not there, but his sons welcomed us most kindly and feasted our men royally on mutton and maize bread.

Next morning the air was clearer than ever, and we realized how attractive was the country into which we had stumbled blindly, as it were, the night before. The ranch—for the place corresponded somewhat to my idea of a South American *estancia*—lay in the midst of an immense sweep of grassy upland, above which to the north rose snow-clad ridges fringed with firs. That day's march, from Yetim Dōbe to Qizil Bulak near the foot of the Muzart Pass, was one of the most enjoyable I have ever performed. Our guide, one of the Haji's sons, led us over one little pass after another, in and out of charming green valleys, some inhabited, others not, some clothed only with wild rose and barberry, others dotted with clumps of trees resplendent in gorgeous autumn tints, orange, russet, gold and scarlet. We lunched contentedly off cold partridge sandwiches and cake under a clump of desert poplars in the middle of a hay-field perched up on a hill-side opposite the snows; a picturesque Sart woman gathered wisps of mown hay near by and loaded them on a quaint wheel-less bullock-cart. She was not in the least shy, and exchanged remarks with us the while. On this and the following day we enjoyed such sport after small game as I had never known before. I was accustomed in the mountains to the south of Kashgar to getting as many red-legged partridge on the march as I liked, with a few sand-grouse, pigeons and perhaps a duck or two thrown in; but never had I found myself in such a small-game shooter's paradise as the southern valleys of the Central Tien Shan. Without straying a hundred yards from the road I shot (1) red-legged partridge, (2) *sisi*, a kind of very small and succulent partridge common in Baluchistan and Persia, but not seen by us elsewhere in Chinese Turkistan, (3) sand-grouse, (4) teal, (5) hares, (6) blue pigeons, besides which I missed an easy chance at a pair of those fine birds (7) imperial sandgrouse. I may mention here that on this tour altogether we came across no less than fourteen different

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of Gold" which form the northern rim of the Tibetan plateau. Our first objective was the hill-village of Polu, three short marches south of Keriya; thence we proposed to visit the oases along the foot of the Qaranghu Tagh or Mountains of Darkness, that wildest and most inaccessible central section of the Kunlun which rises in the great massif of K 5 to a height of 23,890 feet. The trip proved somewhat disappointing, for the hateful dust-haze persisted and we saw little along the road beyond our immediate surroundings. Only once, for a short hour or two, did the veil lift. Nevertheless the journey was interesting in the extreme and on the whole enjoyable. Very few explorers had visited this secluded bay beneath the northern ramparts of Tibet, and the region may certainly be classed among the remotest and least-known inhabited corners of High Asia, outside Tibet itself.

The village of Boghaz Langar, at which the last of the above extracts was written, is the southernmost village of the main oasis of Keriya and lies at a height of 5,150 feet above the sea, or 700 feet higher than the town. Close by we visited the famous shrines of Imam Ghazz 'Ali, one of the heroes of local Muhammadan tradition, and of a lady known as Bu Hanifa. The place is remarkable for its plane-trees of immense age and bulk, veritable mountains of ancient wood, gnarled and monstrous like boulders in a torrent-bed. Next day we marched up the left bank of the Keriya River, passing one or two small isolated oases, and camped at a point 6,500 feet above the sea where the stream cuts through the foothills in an almost straight canyon 300 or 400 feet deep. It was a curious camp; though our tents were pitched fifty yards from the edge, the river could be neither seen nor heard and we seemed to be in the middle of a bare rolling moor of sand and scrub. Every drop of water for man and beast had to be brought by hand in buckets and gourds up a terrifying cliff-track known only to the guides we had brought with us. Next morning the haze was thicker than ever and we could see nothing of the massifs of the Altun Tagh, 21,000 feet high, which we knew impended over us at a distance of scarcely 25 miles. For hours we toiled up sandy tracks, new reaches and abysses of the river-gorge coming dimly into view at each corner. I was impressed by the quantities of drift-sand everywhere; even at this height the whole hill-side seemed to be silted up with sand blown from the distant Takla Makan, in marked contrast with the approaches to the Kashgar Range which we

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do those of Qungur. The foot of the Oitagh Glacier is only 8,800 feet above the sea, as against an average of 12,000 feet in the case of the smaller and much less steeply-pitched glaciers of the Qaratash basin. The volume of the Oitagh Glacier is really enormous, but its ice-fall is so steep that the whole glacier is barely 4 miles long. It has several remarkable features. One is its tributary, the Bül Ush, which butts into it from the north-west near its foot, pushing it right across the valley and jamming it against the steep south-western side. A depression about 150 feet deep is thus formed above the bulge, and into this falls the moraine-stream, which travels under the ice for a mile and reappears from a remarkable cave in the black ice of the glacier-foot. Before joining the main glacier, the Bul Ush runs parallel with but about 2,000 feet immediately above it. A series of magnificent water-falls descends from the upper glacier to the lower at this point; one of them is at least 500 feet high and falls clear like the Swiss Staubbach, while another spouts out from a cleft in the cliff like tea from a pot. Yet another feature of the Oitagh glacier is its three parallel lateral moraines, one of which has a double edge with a trough 2–4 feet deep between.

The vegetation of the "alcove" at the head of the Oitagh valley, though of the same Tien Shan type, is altogether richer than that of the Alps of Qungur, doubtless owing to the lower elevation and to the shelter afforded by the tremendous precipices which enclose it on every side but the north-east. We had no rain, but from the appearance of the vegetation, the accounts of the inhabitants and the close proximity of the ice-clad mass of Chakragil I should say that the precipitation is at least as heavy as that of Kaying Bashi. Rowan-trees are more common and have great bunches of berries the size of small cherries: wild currants abound, and the conifers grow more densely if not taller. One fallen giant I measured was 112 feet long.

At the summer grazings the Turki "Taghlik" inhabitants, of Pilal occupy *aq-ois* like the Kirghiz, just as do the Tajiks of Sarikol who are racially totally different from either. They graze all kinds of stock, including yaks, which they breed for the Kashgar meat market, not for riding or milk. The Kashgar military authorities put from 25 to 50 horses out to grass up the valley every summer. The inhabitants of the *jilgha* are assessed for revenue at 500 *charaks* of barley, which can

133 Tien-shan on the north and the Kun-lun Mountain range on the south. Generally speaking, this area can be divided into three sections: namely, the core desert area, the piedmont alluvial fans, and the isolated oases. In the core area of the Takla Makan Desert, the absence of moisture bars all animal [361] and plant life. In the alluvial fans at the piedmonts of Tien-shan and the Kun-lun there are settlements and towns. However, they are rather widely separated. The alluvial fans [137] are not all alike. In the higher plateaus of the southern fringe of the Takla-Makan near the Kun-lun ranges vegetation is to be found only at great elevations where the proximity of glaciers provides moisture and allows vegetation to grow for a few months of the year. It also is found in the extremely confined spaces that streams fed by these glaciers leave at the bottom of deep-cut, narrow gorges. Oases are strung singly like a chain, especially along the fringe of the southwestern corner of the Takla Makan desert. They are generally located between the hilly land and the desert and are of different sizes and conformations, depending upon the local relief.

The basin itself is higher on the southwestern corner, near the massive mountain ranges of the Pamirs. The elevation of this part of the basin is around 4,500 to 4,800 feet. It inclines gently towards the east and northeast, where the elevation is around 3,600 feet. Thus, the rivers run from the southwestern mountainous area, along the edge of the Takla Makan and toward the east. East of the Takla Makan is the oval depression of the Lop Nor where the Tarim River ends.

The structure of the basin is that of a depressed part of the Kun-lun range. The southern edge is higher than the northern edge, revealing that the southern edge of the basin was joined with the hilly land of the lower part of the Kun-lun range.

The Kun-lun Region: On the southern flank of the Tarim Basin the Kun-lun range extends in an unbroken line. It starts from the "roof of Asia" - the Pamirs - and forms a gigantic and massive feature of the southern border between Sinkiang and the Tibetan Plateau on the south. On this range lies the watershed between the drainage areas of the Oxus and the Tarim Rivers. East of the Pamirs it separates into several high parallel ranges. These ranges are cut by the Yarkand River and its tributaries, the main feeders of the Tarim. At an elevation of some 16,500 feet above sea level there is the Karakoram pass, which is the only practicable means of access to Ladak and the uppermost Indus Valley. Farther to the east, the Kun-lun raises a practically impenetrable barrier to any sort of traffic. The two rivers which water the Khotan oasis break through the northernmost main range, but their passage ends largely through extremely deep-cut and generally quite

000 oases. A trade road, looping around the desert, links the oases
133 like beads on a string, forming a U with the open end toward the
491 east.

131 Dsungaria is in northern Sinkiang, between the Tienshan and the Altai mountains which mark the frontier between Sinkiang and
132 Western Mongolia. Precipitation here is slightly higher, and
137 steppe vegetation makes pastoralism possible. Northern Dsungaria
233 was the avenue of migration followed by the Mongols in their west-
[487] ward conquests.

2. Pastoral nomadism

233 In 1943, there were 11,720,000 sheep and goats in Sinkiang, 1,550,000 cattle, 870,000 horses, and 90,000 camels, totalling 14,230,000. In 1947 the province reported 12,266,000 sheep and goats, 1,659,000 cattle, 1,027,000 horses, and 85,000 camels, a total of 15,037,000. The total has remained somewhat constant over a period of time, probably due to the fact that pasture land is poor and care of the herds inadequate. Most of the livestock are in Dsungaria, pastured in the steppe land by nomad Kazakhs or Mongols. There are many variations to the techniques of herding animals since cattle, horses, and camels each prosper best on different kinds of pasture. The problem is to devise the best combinations of animals to be maintained and to select the appropriate pasture, decide how long to remain on a pasture, when to move, and how.

3. Oasis agriculture

241 There are two kinds of oases in Sinkiang: those in the south,
312 which are sharply isolated from each other by desert stretches and the oases of the north, which have fringes of land in which rainfall farming prevails. When irrigation was introduced, it seems to have been practiced first on the lower courses of the rivers, where the soil was soft and the engineering problems required only the digging of simple ditches from the banks of the streams. In the course of time, as knowledge of engineering developed, the tendency was for the oasis to move upstream toward the boulder slopes at the edge of the foothills, but not back into the gorges where the problems were far too great.

Oasis engineering is extremely simple. The basic pattern is a main canal from the river, branching into smaller canals which branch in turn into ditches which deliver water to the fields, all arranged so that water flows by gravity from level to level, without the pumping or bailing devices which are widely used in China and in Soviet Turkestan to lift water from lower to higher levels.

[133] In volume of discharge, the rivers of the Tarim system are far behind the two great rivers of Soviet Inner Asia, the Syr Darya and the Amu Darya. The total discharge of all streams in Sinkiang is about 3400 cubic meters per second, of which about seventy per cent is in the Tarim Basin. In irrigation engineering

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the sons of the Turki families in the neighbourhood, but the innkeepers were still mostly Chinese.

It was here[1] that we experienced the one serious mishap of our journey. One of the carters had volunteered to cook the dinner, and having espied round the well-mouth a thick growth of toadstools, privately decided to flavour the *mien* with them. Luckily for us the experiment, from a culinary point of view, was a failure. The gravy in which the macaroni floated was grey, slimy, and carried globules of oil on its surface, being besides nauseous to the taste. In consequence we ate but little, and one of the party finding a fragment of what she took to be a mushroom in her bowl, removed it with her chopsticks and cast it on to the rubbish heap which lay in a corner of the room. Another, less wise, ate her portion without question, and an hour later was taken exceedingly ill, so that for some hours we wondered how things would go with her. By evening, however, the symptoms abated, and she gradually recovered. Others of the party were also affected, but less seriously.

It was consequently with a renewed sense of gratitude to Almighty God that we moved on to Yükoshu—'The Elms'—where by the side of the village pond we found a spacious and empty inn, clean and comfortable, where a quiet night did wonders in restoring strength. We were now only seventeen miles from the town of Hami, and next morning we started early, all excitement at the thought of being soon in that ancient and renowned city. We travelled first over an undulating grassy plain, and later on through a belt of sand. We had only gone two miles when we saw the Chinese Evangelist, who had gone on ahead, galloping back towards us and riding a strange horse. To our amazement he brought the news that Mr. Hunter (whom we believed

[1] [Chang Mushui -- Analyst]

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and covered with handsome carpets. In accordance with the custom we took off our shoes before mounting them. The family wardrobe was kept in handsome, inlaid boxes, and on the tables stood large brass dishes which served to hold the national dish of 'pillau,' as well as brass and copper pots for purposes of purification.

In every house there were several wives and many children. The number of inhabitants of such cities as stated on maps and in surveys is seriously underrated, the extraordinarily rapid increase both by the number of children born and by colonisation having brought the population to a much higher figure than statistics allow.

After visiting a few homes, we proceeded to view a remarkable willow tree which is reckoned as being one of the sights of Hami. This plant presents a congeries of about fifty trunks, curiously gnarled, knotted, and intertwined, and yet all are said to grow from one root, having spread so as to fill several courtyards. After duly admiring this wonder we returned to the cart, and when we had taken our seats, opened our parcel of books. In a moment the word went round, and we were the centre of an excited crowd of boys, each of whom wanted to buy a volume. Experience of the bold and insolent Moslem schoolboy, however, had taught us to be wary in dealing with them, so before we allowed one copy to be purchased the Evangelist explained that on every page the sacred name of 'Huda' (God) was written, which must on no account be treated with disrespect. Nevertheless, for as long as the store of books lasted, we sold them as fast as we could hand them out to both old and young alike, and when the last was gone the demand for more was so persistent that the driver was obliged to whip up

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birds had made their nests. This was the most striking example of wind erosion that we saw.

This last stage had been taken in company with Mr. Hunter, whose little cart frequently made better stages than our heavy vehicles could manage. At this point we were all needing small repairs to our carts, and also the stony roads had become very heavy on the shoes of our teams, but Mr. Hunter now produced a travelling farrier's outfit, and with the help of his man shod the mules, greatly to the admiration of the Chinese by-standers, who commented freely on the resourcefulness of this experienced traveller. Mr. Hunter's man was a Mongolian youth, called 'Nimga.' The Living Buddha, to whom he was subject, had given him as an orphan boy to the missionaries. He always slept where he could watch the horses, and on one occasion, when he felt certain that horse-stealers were prowling around, lay down on a horse's back and slept there. His horsemanship was splendid, accustomed as he was to riding from infancy.

The Turki innkeeper, a tall, lean, bearded Moslem, looked with some suspicion at this party of foreigners. 'What have they come for?' he asked Mr. Hunter. 'Is it bones, plants or game that they want?' 'Nothing of the kind,' was the answer, 'these are missionaries.'

'Oh, that's different,' he grunted, 'but some of those who come, why there's no knowing what they want! There was a man here once upon a time, and his servant told me that he came to Chekulu in order to measure the distance to the sun! A likely tale! Couldn't he measure it in his own country? Surely you can *sometimes* see the sun in Western lands?'

For four hours that evening we descended a smooth, downhill road, and on reaching the plain entered a sandy basin about twenty miles across, the lower part

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of which was full of tamarisk mounds. Many of these stood twenty feet high, and here, as everywhere in the desert, each plant was raised on a mound accumulated round its roots, this being the soil blown by the wind from some more fertile region. Among the tamarisks were plants of Saksaul (*Anabasis Ammodendron*), whose contorted stems, grey cracked bark, green plumes of small greyish leaves, and pink fruit differentiated them from the more feathery species. It has been computed that these tamarisk hills may be from 500 to 1000 years old. The trunks of a forest of dead poplars stood beyond, and added a final touch to the desolation of the scene.

Tsikioking—'The Seven Cornered Well'—stands in the sandy basin, and is now a place of some importance, boasting a small Government Official who also controls the post-office. It is here that the roads divide which lead from Hami to Turfan, and Hami to Kucheng. We were following the latter, but the telegraph wire went via Turfan to Urumchi. Great as was our desire to see Turfan—a most interesting locality—we realised that it was scarcely safe to enter such a hot area at midsummer. We were warned that at this season people were dying from heat, and that the inhabitants protected themselves by spending the hours from sunrise to sunset in underground cave dwellings. The Turfan depression descends to two hundred feet below sea-level, and presents conditions most favourable to agriculture but almost insupportable to man. Tsikioking is better supplied with fuel than any of the surrounding oases, and in winter its population is increased by families who move here for those months. The best fuel known in the desert is the root of the tamarisk. It is of dark hard wood which, chopped into small pieces and sun-dried looks like coal, and has a great deal of its burning